



EDITORIALS

Playing the game

Let's get one thing clear: Everything about the on hold special legislative session is political.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher denies it, but his motive for calling the special session is political and designed to improve his image with voters going into the fall gubernatorial election.

House Democratic leaders made a purely political decision last Thursday when they adjourned after meeting for only about an hour. They were not going to give Fletcher the political advantage against Democratic gubernatorial candidate Steve Beshear.

Senate Republican leaders played politics when they met Monday and passed all of Fletcher's legislation, including tax and appropriations bills that are supposed to originate in the House.

State Republican Party officials were using the special session impasse for political purposes when they organized phone calls to voters in House Democrats' districts, and State Democratic Party Chairman Jonathan Miller was countering that with his Capitol press conference Tuesday charging the phone calls prove the political nature of the special session.

It's politics and the reason it's called a game. Just like chess, Monopoly or contract bridge, each side is seeking an advantage over the other, a finesse that catches the other player off guard and assures a win.

The problem is that this game involves more than \$400 million in new state debt the taxpayers must pay off and more than \$300 million in tax incentives the taxpayers also must live with for a generation ahead.

Who at this point is ahead in points?

We'd call it an even split.

Fletcher has gained nearly three weeks to seek a compromise on what House Democrats can live with politically. House Democrats now must show they're capable of making that compromise as opposed to being merely political obstructionists. And Senate Republicans have proven their political loyalty to their governor.

The party leaders are doing what party leaders do.

And the final point in this political melodrama: Fletcher intends to call legislators back to the Capitol on July 30, exactly four days before the Fancy Farm Picnic that is the unofficial start of the gubernatorial campaign.